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HISTORICAL SKETCH  
— OF —  
FIRST PARISH  
HAVERHILL, MASS.



BY THE PASTOR  
REV. FRANK A. GILMORE,  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1895.

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HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

First Parish, Haverhill, Mass.

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# HISTORICAL SKETCH

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# First Parish, Haverhill, Mass.

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In 1640, twelve persons from the towns of Ipswich and Newbury came up the river Merrimac and settled in the wild woods of Pentucket. This tract of land now called Haverhill, had been granted by the General Court to the Rev. Nathaniel Ward, of Ipswich, who, it would appear, was hoping to see a town founded here and to have his son John Ward settled as its minister.

The land had been granted on condition that "they build there before the next General Court." This will account for the coming of the twelve persons from Ipswich and Newbury in 1640, the year the grant was made. The Rev. John Ward did not come in that year but came the next year (1641), probably in October.

The founding of this city and the beginning of its religious teaching and ministrations are almost exactly synchronous. The settlement was originated by a clergyman,

the Rev. Nathaniel Ward. It was named Haverhill for the English birthplace of his son. Except for the single season of 1640, the life of this city and of this parish are contemporaneous.

JOHN WARD, 1641-1694.

I date the beginning of this parish from 1641, when John Ward came and entered upon the work of the ministry. The parish was not formally and officially organized till 1645, just two hundred and fifty years ago. But all that time, from 1641 to 1645, Mr. Ward was active, earnest and influential as a clergyman and as a citizen. There was no meeting-house and the people gathered under a tree near the burying-ground. When stormy they assembled in a private house. We date our anniversary from 1645. The actual beginning of this church dates from 1641, when pastor Ward preached his first sermon to that handful of settlers beneath the tree, with the glancing Merrimac on one hand, a few newly dug graves, marking what is now Pentucket Cemetery, on the other; and all around the unbroken contiguity of the forest.

John Ward was eminently fitted to be a leader among such a band of pioneers. His father, Nathaniel Ward, minister at Ipswich (Agawam), was a graduate of Cambridge University, England. He was for a time pastor at Standon, Hertfordshire, in England, but driven out on account of his non-conformity, came to New England in 1634. In 1638, he was appointed by the General Court to draw up a code of laws for New England. His son John was born in Haverhill, Essex County, England, November 5, 1606. He was a graduate of Cambridge, from which he

received the degrees of A. B. and A. M. He came to this country in 1639.

Cotton Mather, in the "Magnalia," speaks of him as "learned, ingenious, religious. He was a person of quick apprehension, a clear understanding, a strong memory, a facetious conversation, an exact grammarian, an expert physician, and, which was top of all, a thorough divine. But which rarely happens, these endowments of his mind were accompanied with a most healthy, hardy and agile constitution of body which enabled him to make nothing of walking on foot a journey as long as thirty miles together."

"He was of a modest and bashful disposition and very sparing of speaking especially before strangers, or such as he thought his betters. He was wonderfully temperate in meat, in drink, in sleep, and he was always expressed, I had almost said affected, a peculiar sobriety of apparel. He was a son most dutiful unto his parents. Though he had great offers of rich marriages in England, yet he chose to marry a meaner person whom exemplary piety had recommended. He lived with her for more than forty years in such a happy harmony that when she died he professed that in all this time he had never received one displeasing word or look from her." It appears that his wife, whose name was Alice Edmunds, was to have inherited a revenue of £200 per year if she married a minister. This revenue would have been Ward's if he had conformed to the requirements of the Church of England. "But," says Mather, "he left all the allurements and enjoyments of England, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God in a wilderness."

The first mention of Mr. Ward in the Town Records is the statement that in 1642 he was granted sixteen acres for a home lot by the town. When the land on which the city now stands was purchased of the Indians in 1642, the names of John Ward, Robert Clements, Tristram Coffin, Hugh Sherratt and William White appear on the part of the settlers, while the sachems Saggahew and Passaquoi make their mark in the form of a bow and arrow.

In 1644, an attempt was made to organize churches at Haverhill and at Andover, but when the delegates met at Rowley, "most of those who were to join together in church fellowship at that time, refused to make the confession of their faith and repentance, because as was said, they declared it openly before in other churches upon their admission into them. Whereupon the messengers of the churches not being satisfied the assembly brake, before they had accomplished what they intended."

But in October of 1645, the council again met at the same place and "John Ward was ordained pastor of the church in Haverhill on the north side of the Merrimac, and Mr. John Woodbridge was ordained pastor of the church at Andover on the south side of the same." It causes a smile as we read that the council was held at Rowley because neither Haverhill nor Andover "were able to entertain the people who were like to gather."

The date of this council was October 24, 1645, probably old style, making the true date November 5. We have placed it on this date for convenience sake.

The parish organized at Andover at the same date with this has had a long and honorable history. It celebrated



its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary, October 2d, with a very interesting programme and a large attendance.

As a curious bit of history I may mention that James Ward the brother of the Rev. John was found guilty in company with another minister's son of stealing money and gun-powder from a house in Cambridge. They being students at Harvard College "were ordered by the Governor to be there whipped which was performed by the President himself."

The church which was thus formed at Haverhill consisted of fourteen persons: eight males and six females. Their names are not preserved. This was the twenty-sixth church founded in the colony of Massachusetts, Haverhill being the twenty-third settlement.

1646. The town voted to make Mr. Ward's land rate free so long as he remained their pastor. His salary was £40 per year.

1648. The first meeting-house was built. It stood on the "lower knowle at the lower end of the mill lot;" in what is now Pentucket Cemetery. This structure was twenty-six feet long, twenty feet wide, and one story high. It had no gallery or cupola. The rough stones which formed its underpinning were to be seen within the present century.

1666. John Hutchins is given permission "to build a gallery at ye west end of ye meeting-house."

1669. £10 is added to Mr. Ward's salary making in all £50.

Every man in the settlement was obliged to pay a ministerial tax according to his estate. If any man neglected or

refused to do this, or brought in a false account it was in the power of the selectmen "to rate such persons and doom them as they please on account of the deficit." It was also their duty to hire some one to keep the meeting-house in order.

The following vote shows the regard in which they held their ministers and the privilege of Sunday gatherings.

Andrew Greely, Sr. was elected to keep the ferry; "provided that he agree and will carry over the inhabitants of the town and the inhabitants of the town of Merrimac (Bradford) over against us, for three pence a horse, and a penny a man; and that he will carry all ministers over free that come upon visitation to us, and in particular Mr. Symes (of Bradford); and that if the inhabitants of the town over against us do come over to meet with us on the Sabbath days, they shall have free use of the ferry boat for the occasion without paying anything."

1680. Mrs. Ward dies. Mr. Ward had been laboring here for almost forty years. He was now seventy-four years old. He asked for an assistant to help carry the work. A Mr. Cushing was called and offered £100, besides the £60 due Mr. Ward as salary. All this should be paid "part money, part wheat, part Rye and part Indian corn, all good, dry, sweet, clean and merchantable." But Mr. Cushing did not come.

1689. Benj. Rolfe of Newbury began to preach as Mr. Ward's assistant, with a salary of £40. Mr. Ward was to have his old salary of £60 and board Rolfe. He accepted a call and settled in 1692.

1693. Mr. Ward died December 27. Only a few Sun-

days before he had preached a sermon with vigor notwithstanding his eighty-eight years. At the funeral, Mr. Rolfe said of him, "these four years have been the happiest and most profitable of my life. I have had the admonitions of a father and friend; an example constantly before me of undissembled virtue and ardent piety."

BENJ. ROLFE, 1692-1708.

On January 7, 1694, Mr. Rolfe was ordained. He was to have £60 per annum in wheat, rye and Indian corn, "and upon the town's charge at convenient season annually there shall be laid in for him a stock of good, sweet, dry hay for his horse during the winter."

Mr. Rolfe's letter of acceptance shows that the ideal pastorate to his mind was the life long one. "I do express myself willing to settle myself among you so long as the people of God here do continue in the true faith and peace of the Gospel."

1695. Soon after Rolfe's ordination, the question of a new meeting-house began to agitate the people. We find a vote in the record giving permission to build a gallery at the east end of the meeting-house. This was a sort of compromise between those who wanted a new church building and those who did not. The gallery was not built. But in 1697 a vote was passed to build a new meeting-house and a committee chosen to take full charge, only they must not exceed £400 in cost. A vote was then taken on the location of the new edifice with this result: "for the old place that now is, twenty-five. For the common-land near John Kezars, fifty-three."

1699. A special committee chosen to view the new

meeting-house and report if the town should accept it, reported as follows: "We have viewed the house within and without and have measured the house in its length, breadth and height and find them all to exceed the covenant dimensions. The outside is well fitted and comely; for the work within we find and account it to be good, substantially well and commendably done with respect to the walls, pulpits, seats below and in the galleries and cannot but say we like and approve the work."

{ NATH. SALTONSTALL,  
SIMON WAINWRIGHT,  
LIEUT. JOHN WHITE,  
CAPT. JOHN WHITTIER,  
DAN'L ELA.

The town then voted that "the new meeting-house shall be the place where the people shall in future meet and attend for the worship of God."

Accordingly the old meeting-house was abandoned and the town voted to dispose of it to the best advantage. We do not know to what use it was put or just how long it stood.

The new building stood on what is now City Hall Park. It was "fifty feet long, forty-two feet wide and eighteen feet stud." Some years after it was built a cupola was added and a picture of the building painted on a panel was for many years in the front room of Harrod's Tavern. Harrod's Tavern stood where City Hall is now, and was the place where Washington slept when he passed through Haverhill on his tour of New England. In moving into the new structure a special committee was chosen to "seat

the meeting-house." This was a difficult and delicate task, for persons were seated according to their social rank. A second committee was chosen to seat the first committee lest they should be unfair in seating themselves. It was further voted that any person who refused to sit in the seat appointed to him or sat in the seat of another should be fined one shilling.

With the people now fairly settled in the new and larger meeting-house; the report of the "committee to seat the meeting-house" accepted; with the new pastor Benj. Rolfe and his young wife duly established; we may pause a moment to take a closer look at their service of worship.

It is a Sabbath morning in the year 1700. The warm summer sun looks down upon a straggling line of houses, about one hundred in number. Most of them are on the slope on the upper side of what is now Water Street. A few are higher up the river. John Kezar and Lieut. Johnson are close by the new meeting-house. The parsonage house is just up the hill (immediately opposite this church). Capt. Simon Wainwright lives on what is now Winter Street. Close by in the field is a garrison house commanded by Johnathan Emerson; and five other such garrisons, some of them brick, are standing in various parts of the town.

Away to the north-west, a mile or so, is a house and farm purchased by Thomas Dustan with the money paid his heroic wife Hannah for the ten scalps which she brought home from the island of Conticook.

Suddenly is heard the beating of a drum. It is Richard Littlehale, who has been duly chosen to "beat the drum on

the Lord's day morning and evening and on lecture days, and to have thirty shillings." The people all understand what the drum means, and they like it better than they did Abram Tyler's horn which they tried awhile ; for after paying him his stipend of corn, they reemployed Littlehale and his drum. Soon Andrew Greely in the ferry boat is seen bringing some of the people from the Bradford side who are minded to visit their Haverhill friends. Then several horses come in sight bearing each its double burden of man and wife. Some have three or even four persons, the father in front holding one child and behind on the postillion the mother with another. There were no wagons in those days. In 1753 there was only one chaise in town. Those early roads were hardly more than cart tracks. Main Street, Winter Street, Merrimack and Emerson Streets, as well as Summer and Washington Streets were not laid out. There were roads along Water Street and Mill Street to Amesbury and Salisbury, and across the river to Andover, Topsfield, Ipswich and the coast.

By nine o'clock all the people who are coming are seated in the meeting-house. A few years before the record informs us that there were sixty-four freemen in town—we may suppose that the total population did not exceed three hundred and fifty or four hundred. Of these many are too far away, others are unable to come. But unless they had a good excuse they were fined for "absenting themselves on the Lord's day."

There are but eight pews in the church built and owned by private families. The rest of the people sit on benches or seats. The women on one side, the men on the other,

each and all in the place assigned by the committee. Now the minister comes in escorted by the sexton. Every one looks at the young pastor as he mounts the pulpit steps and turns about, showing to good advantage his huge periwig with its massive powdered rolls hanging down over his shoulders; his long black robe almost concealing his black silk stockings and bright silver shoe buckles. The audience is very plainly dressed. Only a few families can afford style, and the others do not dare to assume it, because only a few years before two daughters of Hanniel Bosworth were fined ten shillings each for wearing silk; and John Hutchins' wife was brought into court for wearing a silk hood, but upon testimony of "her being brought up above the ordinary way," was discharged. But Mrs. Swett was at the same court, and for the same offence fined ten shillings. All whose estates did not exceed £200 were liable to fines for "bravery in dress."

In the audience are Capt. Ayer and his company of twenty soldiers, who are guarding the town against attack by the Indians. We notice Simon Wainwright who was to be killed by the Indians in 1708, and Goodwife Swan who was to drive an iron spit through the body of a savage as he tried to thrust himself through her door. Over yonder is Mr. Merrill whose little son was scalded to death. And those two ladies are the widows Ladd and Haynes whose husbands were killed and their sons carried off by the Indians the summer before. That woman with the strong features and firm mouth is Hannah Dustan, whose name is in everybody's mouth.

The service lasts from nine till past twelve. Mr. Rolfe

reads and expounds a chapter from the Bible. His prayer is nearly one hour long, and his sermon one hour and a half. We do not know the title of that discourse, but we may choose one from a number of titles that have come down to us. "A Pack of Cards to win Christ," or "The Spiritual Mustard Pot to make the soul sneeze with devotion." Then a hymn is lined out and all sing. Here is the first verse:

" Why dost withdraw thy hand aback  
And hide it in thy lappe?  
O pluck it out and be not slack  
To give thy foes a rap." •

Then one of the deacons rises and says, "Brethren of the congregation offer freely, as God has prospered you." Then beginning with the magistrates and chief gentlemen, then the elders and all men in the congregation, finally all single persons, widows and women in absence of their husbands file up to the deacons seat by one aisle, deposit their contributions and return to their seats, where all stand till the benediction is pronounced and the minister has passed out.

Now the people take an hours recess. They talk and gossip. Some go home to dinner and take friends to dine with them. Others who come from a distance feed their horses, while the women get the lunch boxes ready. The men stand in little groups on the church green or gathered about the stocks and whipping post, where the constable is telling about a man whom he whipped, and how the fellow "coolly offered to take as many more for half a



pint of rum.”† Goodman Greely is speaking of the new grist mill which he has erected on East Meadow river. One red faced boy is ashamed as his companions laugh because the tythingman had hit his head a smart rap as he nodded during the long prayer. On a post at the side of the church is a huge she wolf’s head which Timothy Eaton had shot on the ox common, and for which the town granted him ten shillings.‡ Some young men with two or three soldiers are looking into a store room under the pulpit where the town’s powder and ammunition is kept.§ One freckle faced youth remarks that “they keep it under the pulpit because it is the driest place in town.”|| In the afternoon, there are baptisms, collections, and one or two cases of church discipline with confessions. It is past six o’clock when all is over and Mr. Rolfe goes home.

1708. This parish is identified with all that is sorrowful as well as heroic in the history of Haverhill. The horrors of the Indian wars, with shooting, scalping, burning and carrying captive are part and parcel of this parish as well as of this town. The names of Saltonstall, Bradley, White, Ayer, Johnson, Wainwright and others; names which stand for all that is best in our early history; names which appear among those killed or captured; names of those who fought like demons to defend their homes—all these are on the parish rolls. Thomas and Hannah Dustan, whose names are known to every school child in America, were

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† This actually occurred somewhat later.

‡ Really 1696.

§ Order of 1672.

|| Dr. Snow’s sermon at 250th Anniversary of Haverhill.

baptized and admitted to this parish in 1724 by the Rev. John Brown. In 1708 the worst attack which Haverhill ever sustained from an enemy was made August 29, by the Indians and French. They shot Rev. Benj. Rolfe, and wounded him in the arm as he endeavored to hold the door against them. They then tomahawked Mr. Rolfe, his wife and child and put to death three soldiers who were stationed in the house, but who had cravenly refused to defend it. A colored servant took two of the children and hid them and herself in the cellar. They escaped. In all, sixteen persons were killed in this attack on the town, and as many more carried away to Canada. The meeting-house was set on fire but not destroyed. The spot where Rolfe fell is marked by a stone directly opposite the entrance to this church. Mr. Rolfe, his wife and child are buried in Pentucket Cemetery. Mr. Rolfe was born in 1662 in Newbury, and graduated at Harvard in 1684. A pious and upright man beloved by his people and ardently devoting his strength and talents to his ministry.

The earliest extant records of the church is a list of persons baptized by Mr. Rolfe in 1693.

The next pastor was Rev. Joshua Gardiner, 1710 to 1716. In the interim the town had purchased the estate of Mr. Rolfe for £300, and had given "fifteen persons liberty to build a seat to sit in at the hind end of the meeting-house in the west gallery; they promising that they would not build so high as to damnify the light of them windows at the said west end of the said gallery, provided they make up twenty persons to sit in said seat." Also thirteen young ladies were given permission to build a pew in the hind seat

of the east gallery of the meeting-house, provided as in the first place they did not "damnify the light."

1710. The church called Mr. Gardiner, and the town voted to concur with the church in their selection. Mr. Gardiner's salary was £70, half money and half corn, also the use of the parsonage lands. The expenses of Mr. Gardiner's ordination amounting to £12, were paid by the town. Mr. Gardiner remained at this post six years, dying in 1716. Of him it is recorded that "he was distinguished for piety in early life. At the age of thirteen he became a hopeful subject of divine grace. He entered college at sixteen, and graduated at twenty; endearing himself to all who knew him by his correct habits and amiable deportment; and distinguished himself as a scholar and christian." On his tomb is cut: "The Rev. John Gardiner, a man full of the Holy Ghost and faith."

Under Mr. Gardiner, forty-eight were admitted to the church, one hundred and fifty were baptised and seventeen owned the covenant. Among those baptized was Hagar, the negro servant of Benj. Rolfe, whose courage saved the two children. The town voted to pay the expenses of Mr. Gardiner's funeral, and William White was sent to Boston for supplies. The cost was £34, and one of the items is "one barrel of cyder."

The next minister was the

· REV. JOHN BROWN, 1619-1743.

Just before he came the celebrated revivalist George Whitefield preached a sermon at sunrise to a large crowd near the foot of Mill Street.

Under Brown's administration there was another seating of the meeting-house, which took four days and required two committees as before. The parsonage house was repaired; the lime for plastering being hauled by oxen from Newbury. (The sugar and wine, for Mr. Gardiner's ordination, were brought on horseback from Boston. The nails for building watch-houses came on horseback from Ipswich.)

1729. The North Parish was erected. From this time we have regular meetings of the First Parish as distinct from the town meetings. Forty-six members of this church were set off to form the North Parish. In October, 1730, twenty-six others were dismissed to help form the church in what is now Salem, N. H.

1734. West Parish was set off, and seventy-seven members went from this church into it. Under Mr. Brown's ministry four hundred and thirty-eight persons were admitted to the church; fifty-eight adults and one thousand and seventy-six children were baptized. A great religious awakening occurred while Mr. Brown was here, and we find one hundred and ten persons admitted in two months. For ten years Mr. Brown had been ill with consumption before he died in 1742. The town paid his widow £100. This worthy man was a graduate of Harvard in 1714. He married a daughter of Rev. Rowland Cotton, of Sandwich. Four of their sons also graduated at Cambridge. During his labors of twenty-four years in the ministry of this church it had lost largely in numbers by the erection of other parishes; but it had through it all a wholesome and increasing influ-

ence. The number received more than balanced those who were set off.

REV. EDWARD BARNARD, 1743-1774.

His salary was one hundred ounces of silver.

In 1748, the first bell in this town was imported from London and hung on the First Parish Church. £100 were raised to defray the expense of a belfry, and hanging the bell. The belfry was built on the ridge of the meeting-house and a rope came down in the broad aisle. It was voted to ring the bell at ten o'clock every day and at nine every night, and on sabbaths and lectures. Samuel Knowlton, the first bell-man, was succeeded by John Whiting. When he died, his widow rang the bell and kept the meeting-house in order for many years.

In 1766, a new house of worship was erected just north of the old one. It was to cost £300, but we are not surprised to learn that it cost actually over £1000. This was the third structure, sixty-six by forty-five feet in size, and stood till 1837. Then the Parish sold the site of their meeting-house to the city. It is now City Hall Park. They then purchased the present lot and erected a fine new church. This was burned in 1847, and the building in which we are now gathered was built in 1849. It is the fifth house of worship which this Parish has built. It originally faced the park; but it was turned around, raised and the vestry built under it a few years ago.

In 1774, Mr. Barnard died of paralysis. He was a graduate of Harvard, and was settled in the ministry here thirty-one years. During this time he baptized nine hundred

and eight persons, while ninety-four were admitted to the church and ninety-six owned the covenant. He is spoken of as a man of genuine worth, a watchful, affectionate and unwearied pastor. Those who knew him best loved him most.

REV. JOHN SHAW, 1777-1794.

His salary was £100 and the parsonage lands. In 1783, a man by the name of Sawyer, temporarily insane, jumped from the belfry of the church. He intended to alight on the stocks but went over them and was killed by striking the ground. In 1789, Washington visited Haverhill. The event was announced by the First Parish bell. Mr. Shaw called on the General, and Israel Bartlett's porch sheltered him while he waited for the ferry boat. Mr. Shaw died suddenly in 1794, aged forty-eight. He had preached as usual only the day before. He had baptised one hundred and fifty children, fifty persons had owned the covenant, and fifteen were admitted to the church. As his epitaph declares, he was "a bright example of benevolence, meekness, patience and charity, an able advocate of the religion he professed, and a faithful servant of the God he worshipped."

ABIEL ABBOT, 1795-1803,

was the next minister. His salary was £110 with the parsonage lands. In 1803, he asked for an increase of salary. This was refused and he asked for his dismissal. During the term forty-nine persons were admitted to the church, and one hundred and twenty children baptised.

In 1800, a great meeting was held in the meeting-house in memory of Washington. Mr. Abbot's address on this occasion was printed together with Washington's farewell address and a copy sent to every family in the town.

It was five years before the

#### REV. JOSHUA DODGE

came in 1808. His salary was \$500, and the parsonage house and land. In 1809., lots were sold from this land and a ministerial fund started. In 1813, a stove was purchased and placed in the pew of John Dow. This was disposed of in 1815. But in 1821, "two elegant stoves" were given by Hon. Moses B. Moody. In 1827, Mr. Dodge asked and obtained his dismissal. He lived to be eighty-one years old, dying in 1861. One hundred and thirty baptisms, and eighty admissions occurred during his ministry.

1828. The next year the

#### REV. DUDLEY PHELPS

was ordained. His salary was \$700. The parsonage lands had now nearly all been sold, and in 1831 the parsonage house and lot was sold to Dr. Moses Nichols. In 1830, an organ was placed in the church. In 1821, a clock had been placed on the belfry. This was put on the new building in 1837, but went up in smoke with the rest of the building in 1847. In 1834, the connection between Mr. Phelps and the parish was dissolved by a vote of the parish members. This was due

to the increasing Unitarian sentiment in the church and parish. This sentiment had been growing ever since the days of Edward Barnard. Mr. Abbot was practically a Unitarian in his theology. Thus when Mr. Phelps began to preach a more strict theology, it created no little disturbance. A majority finally voted to dissolve the connection, and so Mr. Phelps left. But many members of the parish were highly dissatisfied, and in consequence withdrew and formed, in 1833, the present flourishing Centre Church.

REV. NATHANIEL GAGE, 1834-1840,

was the first regular Unitarian minister of this parish. He remained six years. He was a graduate of Harvard class of 1822. He lived twenty years after leaving this church, dying in Cambridge in 1861.

REV. NATHANIEL FOLSOM

was settled in 1840. His salary was \$800. He remained with the society till 1846.

REV. JAMES RICHARDSON

settled in 1847, and remained till 1850. His memorial window is in the church. It was during his pastorate that the church was burned and the present structure erected.

We are now come to a period within the memory of living men. We shall consequently not dwell on the record from 1850 to the present day. Mr. Richardson was succeeded by Rev. Frederick Hinkley, 1850-1853. Then came Rev. Robert Hassal, 1856-1868. He was followed



by Rev. William T. Clark, 1859-1862, whose name appears in one of the windows of this church. Of Rev. Joseph Angier, 1862-1864; Rev. S. H. Morse, 1865-1866; Rev. James Vila Blake, 1867-1869; Rev. W. H. Spencer, 1869-1873; of Rev. G. H. Patten, 1874; of Rev. W. H. Spencer's second ministry, from 1875-1880; Rev. Thomas E. St. John 1881-1890, and Rev. James Bagley, 1890-1893, it is not necessary for me to speak. These clergymen, like their predecessors in this ancient pulpit, labored assiduously and preached earnestly the word of God as it came to them. Several of them yet living are connected with this parish by ties of old and affectionate regard.

The list of ministers of the First Parish numbers twenty-four. The average time of service is about eleven years. Here is certainly a record to which we may refer with a bit of pride. This parish is the first and oldest in this city. She is, so to speak, the mother of the North, West, and East Parishes. For almost one hundred years this was the only church in the township of Haverhill. The First Baptist Church, founded in 1764, seems venerable yet this church is one hundred and twenty years older than it. The First Universalist Society is but a stripling in comparison, so far as age is concerned, yet we gladly acknowledge, a most vigorous and healthy stripling. Two centuries and a half of this parish, and two hundred and fifty years of Haverhill are interwoven with each other. They are of the same warp and woof; and to pick out and separate the one from the other is to destroy the pattern. Hence we place the seal of this fair city on our programme, and feel how truly it belongs there.

On the rolls of this parish will be found the names of men who fought in the French and Indian wars. Here also are such names as Thomas and Hannah Dustan, Benjamin Rolfe and Nathaniel Saltonstall. The stirring meetings which were called to consider the events preceding and during the Revolution were held in the meeting-house on the City Hall Park. Here in 1765, the Stamp Act was discussed; here in 1770, exciting speeches were made over the Boston massacre. After the battle of Lexington, one hundred and five men marched from Haverhill; seventy-four of these were in the battle of Bunker Hill. Two men, Simon Pike and John Eaton were killed; both were members of this church. Here in 1776, the town voted to sustain Congress with the life and fortune of its people. In 1777, a committee chosen to care for the families of soldiers, is headed by Deacons Chase and Clement of this society. Here in 1778, the town solemnly voted for the union of the states in one confederation. When the celebrated Major Andre was captured Daniel Bradley a member of this parish stood guard over him. In the old First Parish meeting-house, in 1798, was draughted an address to President John Adams and presented to him by our Representative in Congress, Hon. Baily Bartlett, also a member of this parish. In the same place was held the grand celebration in honor of the peace of 1815. From that pulpit, Samuel May, in 1835, delivered one of the first, if not the very first, abolition lecture ever heard in Haverhill.

But beneath all these more striking incidents which show the long, intimate and honorable historical connection between our city and this religious organization, there is

something more important and organic. The effect which this church has had on the civilization of Haverhill, on its education, its morality, its fatherhood and motherhood, is not to estimated. As a stream waters silently and out of sight, the innumerable shrubs upon its banks, so for a quarter millenium this church has nourished, at its roots, the truest life of Haverhill.

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Books used in preperation:

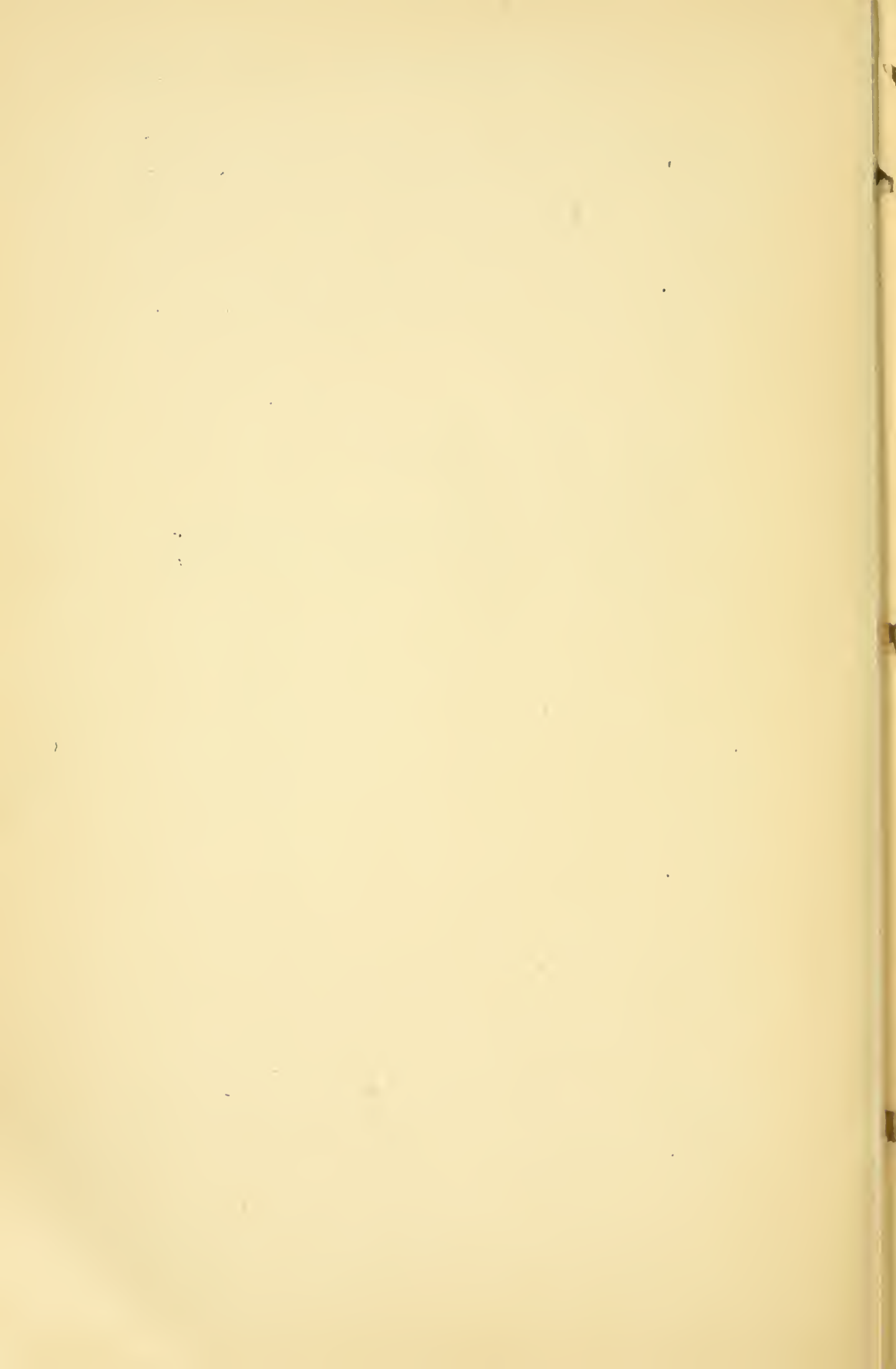
Chase's History of Haverhill.

Myrick's History of Haverhill.

Records of the Church.

Printed account of 250th Anniversary of Haverhill—

Especial addresses by Dr. Snow, Rev. T. E. St. John  
and Rev. Mr. Evarts.



ODE.

FOR THE OCCASION.

Two centuries passed and to-day marks the time  
Of another half way in its round,  
Since our Puritan fathers, nurtured in faith,  
Did this church in the Wilderness found.  
Ah! stern were the men and brave were the maids  
Who came to these regions remote;  
On the slopes of Pentucket they builded their homes  
And sowed here the seeds of a state.

So the years glided on like the Merrimack's tide,  
The few homes to ten thousand have grown;  
The din of a city's life does not disturb  
Our fathers who sleep in the ground.  
And the old church has stood through sunshine and storm,  
From the days of John Ward until now  
A fountain whence flowed the pure waters of life,  
Of Virtue, Religion and Law.

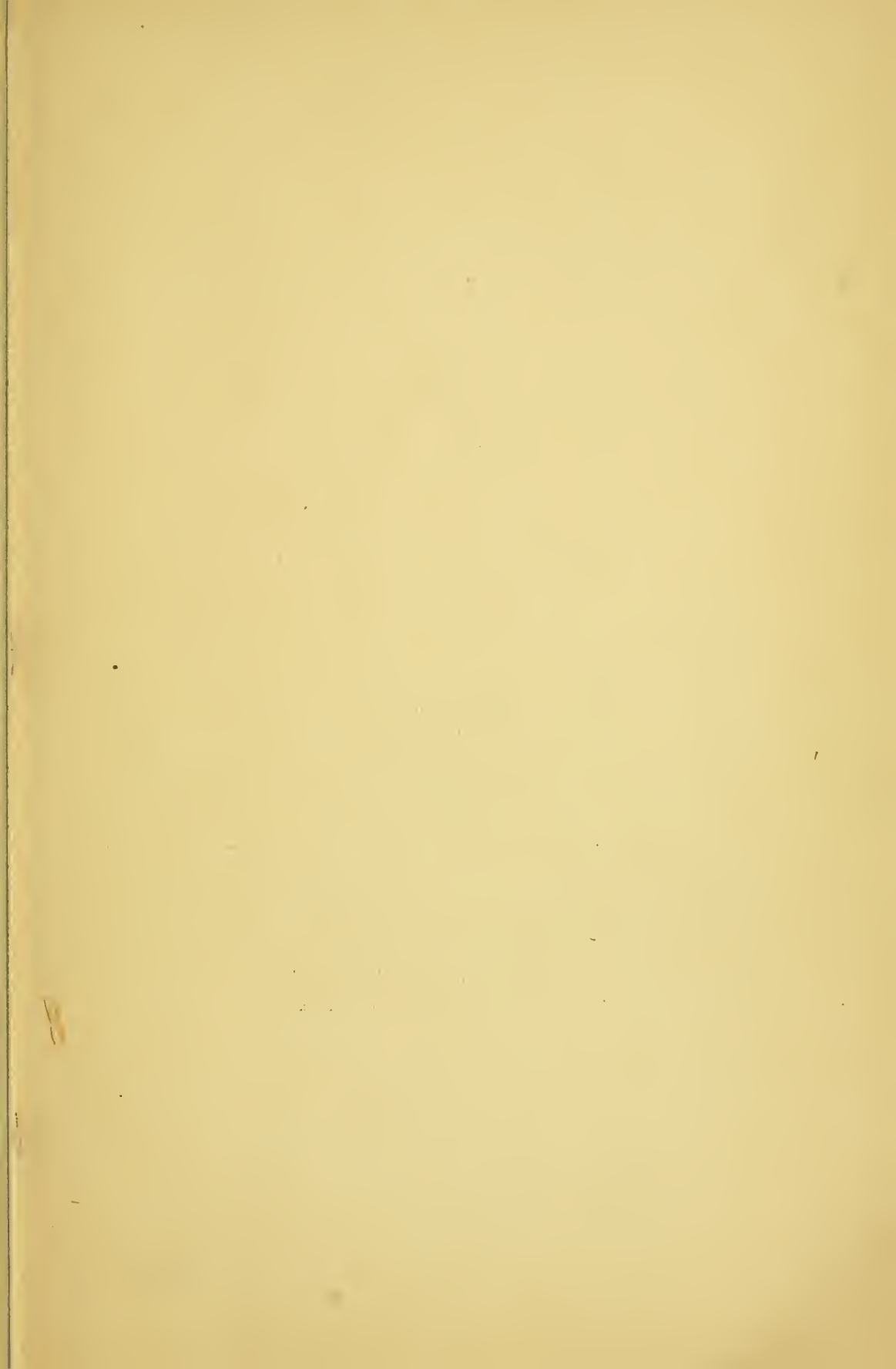
For a century she stood God's oracle here,  
Sole watch tower of Zion afar  
Where men paid their worship and prayed for God's grace,  
Mid the storms of the Indian war.

O! men of to-day how shall we forget,  
The story of days that have flown;  
Of a faith and a life, with its roots in the past,  
But whose fruitage is seen in our own.

At her jubilee gathered her children take pride  
In her past with its faith and its power;  
With her heritage grand to-day she doth stand  
To answer the needs of the hour.

As a clear steady light for the right and the true,  
For all that is noble and good,  
May she shine on our pathway, illumine our minds  
To bring in the fair Kingdom of God.

—*Rev. F. A. Gilmore.*



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